

# A STUDY ON THE SIXTH SEMESTER STUDENTS' OF FKIP UNIVERSITY OF RIAU ABILITY IN IDENTIFYING ENGLISH MORPHEMES

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**Abstract:** *This descriptive research was conducted in order to find out the students' ability in identifying English morphemes. The data were collected using test in the form of multiple choice. The test covered four subtopics; morphemes, allomorphs, derivation and inflection. The sample of this research was the sixth semester students of English study program of FKIP-UR who had passed content subjects English Morphology and Introduction to Linguistics. They consisted of 3 classes: A, B, and C, and using cluster sampling technique, class A was chosen as the sample of this research. Before the data were collected, the try out was conducted in order to make sure that the test was good and valid. There were 7 rejected items and those items were revised before have been distributed to the sample. From the data analysis, it was found out that the students' ability in identifying English morphemes was in **poor** level with the average score 46.20. The result of the students' ability in identifying English morphemes for each subtopic was in the **average** level for morphemes (50), allomorphs (52.5) and inflection (55.7) while derivation was in **poor** level (36.3). Based on the finding, it was suggested that the students need to do more practice in order to help increase their understanding of English morpheme. Further research can focus on studying each subtopic in details; in addition, other researchers can also focus on how to overcome the high level of difficulties of English morphology materials.*

**Key words:** *Ability, Identifying, English Morphemes*

# **STUDI TENTANG KEMAMPUAN MAHASISWA SEMESTER 6 PRODI B.INGGRIS FKIP UR DALAM MENGIDENTIFIKASI ENGLISH MORPHEMES**

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**Abstrak:** Riset deskriptif ini dilaksanakan bertujuan untuk mencari tahu kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi English morphemes. Data diambil menggunakan tes dalam bentuk objektif. Tes mencakupi 4 sub-topik; morphemes, allomorphs, derivation, dan inflection. Sampel riset ini adalah mahasiswa semester 6 prodi B.inggris FKIP UR yang telah lulus mata kuliah English Morphology dan Introduction to Linguistics. Mereka terdiri dari 3 kelas; A, B, dan C, dan dengan menggunakan cluster sampling technique, kelas A terpilih menjadi sampel. Sebelum mengambil data, try out dilaksanakan terlebih dahulu untuk mengetahui bahwa tes bagus dan valid. Ada 7 butir soal yang ditolak dan soal-soal tersebut diperbaiki sebelum didistribusikan kepada sampel. Dari hasil analisis data, ditemukan bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi English morphemes ada di level **rendah** (poor) dengan skor rata-rata 46.20. Hasil dari kemampuan mahasiswa mengidentifikasi setiap sub-topik dari English morphology ada di level **sedang** (average) untuk morphemes (50), allomorphs (52.5), dan inflection (55.7) sementara derivation berada di level **rendah** (poor) (36.3). Berdasarkan data yang didapat, diharapkan mahasiswa dapat melakukan banyak latihan lagi untuk meningkatkan kemampuan mereka dalam memahami materi English morphemes. Riset yang akan datang dapat fokus pada tiap sub-topik; dan juga, periset berikutnya dapat fokus pada bagaimana untuk mengatasi tingkat kesulitan dari materi English morphology.

**Kata kunci:** Kemampuan, Mengidentifikasi, English Morphemes

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are three major parts that constitute a language, they are: Phonology, Syntax and Semantics (Aitchison, 1990) and morphology is a part of syntax. In English study program of FKIP-UR, Morphology is one of the content subjects offered to students. It is offered in semester 4. Before the students learn English Morphology subject, they learn Introduction to Linguistics subject in which one of the topics is Morphology.

As a content subject, morphology is considered to be difficult for students compared to skill subjects. This might be content subject materials need deeper understanding compared to skill subject materials which are considered to be more practical. However, whether the students have problems in morphology subject is not known yet because so far there has not been research about that.

In order to have a picture about the students' opinion about English morphology, the writer did informal interview with some students who had learned Morphology subject. Through an interview to 20 students, all of them realized that morphology is very important. This is true because mastering morphology materials such as inflection, derivation, affixes, etc, will help the language users understand about words and can use them appropriately. This is supported by Fromkin and Rodman (1981:139) say that if we do not know the meaning of a word, we will conclude either that it is a word we do not know or that it is not a word in English. Based on this case, we can get an understanding that English morpheme is really important. The condition that English morphology, as the content subject, needs deep understanding and the importance of morphology whether it is in spoken or in written forms were the reasons why the writer wants to conduct this research.

### **English morphemes**

As it is described by Aitchison (1990) that morpheme is the smallest meaningful units of a language. The smallest meaningful unit means that morpheme cannot be further divided into smaller unit. There are two kinds of morphemes: free morpheme and bound morpheme. Free morpheme (also called a stem or base) is a word that can stand alone. For the example: pen, mother, true (Finegan, 2012:47). The word "pen" has meaning by itself; for writing with ink; the word "mother" has a meaning as female parent, woman who has adopted a child; the word "true" has the meaning in accordance or agreement with fact (Hornby, 1974).

Furthermore, bound morpheme is one that must always occur with a free morpheme or cannot stand alone as a word. For examples: the plural morpheme /s/ in the word pen(s) cannot stand alone as /s/.

### Examples of Morpheme Types

Morpheme Type	Example	
Free	Word Cup	friend chair
Bound	un- (unfriend) -er (teacher) -ly (happily)	ex- (ex-captive) -est (tallest) -tion (information)

Hickey and Lewis, 2013.

### Allomorphs

Allomorphs are variants of morphemes. For Example: The variant /s/ occurs after voiceless stops (taps, nuts, books), the variant /z/ occurs after vowels, voiced stops, laterals and nasals (potatoes, bags, balls, rings), and the variant /ɪz/ occurs after fricatives and affricates (glasses, dishes, watches). Therefore, allomorphs relate to the pronunciation or the realization of bound morphemes. These variants of morphemes are in complementary distribution where one form appears the others are excluded (Aitchison, 1990).

Other examples of allomorphs of the English plural morphemes are:

- /ən/ (schwa) in oxen
- change of vowel in : man/men, mouse/mice
- “zero” in deer/pl-deer, sheep/pl-sheep.

According to Widdowson, (2003: 47) there are a number of allomorphic variants, for example, for the past tense morpheme. It can be realized phonologically by /ɪd/ (graphologically ‘ed’) as in ‘part<sup>ed</sup>’, or this graphological allomorph can be phonologically realized as /d/ ‘pull<sup>ed</sup>’ or /t/ ‘push<sup>ed</sup>’. Or the morpheme may be allomorphically realized by more radical changes to the sound and spelling of the stem form as in ‘sleep’ – ‘slept’, ‘shake’ – ‘shook’, and so on.

### Affixes

According to Aitchison (1990), bound morphemes may be classified as affixes, which are subdivided into prefixes, suffixes and infixes. Prefixes occur before base morpheme while Suffixes occur after the base morpheme. Examples for prefixes are: (dis) obey, (pre) judge, (un) like, etc. (Fromkin and Rodman, 1981:142). Examples for suffixes are: beautiful (ly), sing (er), vocal (ist), etc. There are some more examples for prefix as described by Finegan, 2012 (p.47):

- /re/ + verb → verb (realign, rewrite, retake)
- /mis/ + verb → verb (misspell, misstep, misclassify)

- /un/ + adjective → adjective (unkind, unfair, unreal)
- /un/ + verb → verb (undo, uncover, uninstall)
- /under/ + verb → verb (undercut, undercount, underscore)
- /ex/ + noun → noun (ex-husband, ex-cop, ex-convict)

Hatch and Brown (1995: 272) explain that, there is attitude prefix. Attitude prefixes are the morphemes that ‘convey’ being ‘against’, ‘with’, ‘opposite’, ‘for’, or ‘on the side of’ whatever stem they are added to. A good place to look for such prefixes is in bureaucratic discourse and especially in politics. They are: the prefix *anti-*, *co-*, *counter-*, and *pro-*. News reports supply us with examples: anti-inflation, co-conspirator, counter-revolution, pro-Gore but anti-Clinton. They also can be used with nonpolitical bases as well such as: antibiotic, coauthor, counteract, pro-bilingualism.

The last kind of affixes is Infixes. An infix is a morpheme inserted within another morpheme. In Tagalog (Philippines language), we can see infixing, for example, by comparing the word *gulay* meaning ‘greenish vegetables’ with the word *ginulay*, meaning ‘greenish blue’, which contains the infix /in/ (Finegan, 2012:49). But Aitchison (1990) states that it is not found infix in English language.

## Derivation and Inflection

Bound morphemes or affixes may also be classified as derivational or inflectional affixes according to the effect they produce on the base (Aitchison, 1990). Derivational affixes are bound morphemes which generally combine with the base to change its ‘parts of speech’ class. Verbs may change to noun, adjectives may change to adverbs, etc. Let’s look at the following examples:

- Verbs + /er/ → nouns (teacher, builder, sweeper)
- Adjectives + /ly/ → adverbs (happily, loudly, smoothly)
- /en/ + nouns → verbs (endanger, enslave, enthrone)

However, the part of speech is sometimes not changed by a derivational affix as in the words: like and dislike are both verbs, true and untrue are both adjectives.

Finegan (2012: 47) provides more examples for derivation with adding suffix:

- Noun + /ful/ → adjective (doubtful, beautiful, careful)
- Adjective + /ly/ → adverb (sweetly, really, slowly, responsibly)
- Verb + /ment/ → noun (establishment, advancement, amazement)
- Verb + /er/ → noun (teacher, reader, listener, banker)
- Adjective + /ity/ → noun (sanity, abnormality, reality)
- Adjective + /en/ → verb (darken, brighten, harden, sweeten)
- Noun + /en/ → verb (frighten, lengthen, hasten)

Inflectional affixes are bound morphemes which carry the grammatical meaning like the means of 'plural', 'past tense' or 'possessive'. They do not change the part of speech of the base to which they are added (Aitchison, 1990). Let's look at the following examples:

- If we add the plural morpheme to the nouns: *bag, tin, church*, they remain nouns: *bags, tins, churches*.
- If we add the 'past tense' morpheme to the verbs *walk, drown, rinse*, they are still verbs: *walked, drowned, raised*.

#### Examples of Inflectional Morphemes in English

Inflectional Morpheme	Function	Examples
-s	To make nouns plural	girls
-es	To make nouns plural	boxes
-en	To make nouns plural	oxen
-’s	To make nouns possessive	Tarie ’s book
-s’	To make plural nouns possessive	the girls’ book
-ing	To change the tense of a verb	walking
-ed	To change the tense of a verb	walked
-en	To change the tense of a verb	written
-er	To show comparison in adjectives and adverbs	happier, faster
-est	To show comparison in adjectives and adverbs	happiest, fastest

Hickey and Lewis, 2013.

The summary of the differences between inflectional and derivational morphemes are presented as follows:

#### The Differences between Inflection and Derivation

No.	Inflection	Derivation
1.	Does not change meaning or part of speech of stem.	Changes meaning or part of speech of the stem.
2.	Typically indicates syntactic or semantic relations between different words in a sentence.	Typically indicates semantic relation between the words.
3.	Typically occurs with all members of some large class of morphemes.	Typically occurs with only some members of a class of morphemes.
4.	Typically occurs at margins of words.	Typically occurs before any inflectional suffixes are added.

*Language files* (Ohio State University, 1982:50-52 in Hatch and Brown, 1995:266)

## **Lexical and Grammatical**

Based on Hatch and Brown (1995: 267), affixes are divided neatly into two categories: derivational affixes which are more lexical in nature since they allow us to form new lexical entities, and inflectional affixes which are more grammatical in nature because they are used to show syntactic relations. Free morphemes, however, can also be divided according to whether they carry primarily lexical or grammatical meanings. Single words like prepositions, articles, relative pronouns, are free morphemes that serve grammatical functions, just like the -ing or -s verb affixes. Thus, function words, along with inflectional morphemes, are grammatical morpheme.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This is a descriptive research. It serves to describe, fond of describing (Hornby, 1974). Gay and Airasian (2000:275) state that descriptive method is useful for investigating a variety of educational problems and issues. The writer wants to know the students' ability in identifying English morphemes. From the data of this study, we can get the answer about the students' ability in identifying English morphemes in details, whether about free morpheme and bound morpheme, allomorphs, derivation or inflection.

According to the Fraenkel (1993:80) population is the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the result of study. The population of this research is the 6<sup>th</sup> semester students who have passed content subjects English morphology and introduction to Linguistics. They consist of 3 classes: class A, class B and class C. Therefore, whether class A, class B or class C would be the sample of this research. Surrakhmad (1998:100) states that if the population is homogenous enough and less than 100 persons so the sample should be about 50%; and if they are more than 100 persons, the sample can be about 15%. Because the population of the research is 105 students, the writer decided that the sample for this research is 30%, or around 30 students. In order to decide the sample, the writer used cluster sampling technique. Cluster sampling selects groups, not individuals (Gay and Airasian, 2000:129). Finally, the writer got class A to be the sample after called all of the chairman of each class. Furthermore, the writer chose the class for trying out the instrument and the writer got class B.

The instrument of this research was a set of multiple choice tests about English morphemes. The writer made the test then discussed with the consultants. The test consisted of 40 items which covered 4 divisions: morphemes, allomorphs, derivation and inflection. The number of test items for the four divisions is determined based on the content and the depth analysis of the materials.

Before administering the test, the writer conducted a try-out. The try-out was used to know the quality of the test items, particularly to determine the facility value (difficulty level) of the test items. The test items would be accepted if the difficulty level (FV) is between 0,30-0,70 and it would be rejected if the difficulty level (FV) is below 0,30 (difficult) and over 0,70 (easy) (Heaton, 1975:173).

The form to calculate the difficulty level is as follows:

$$FV = \frac{R}{N}$$

FV = item difficulty

Heaton (1975:178)

R = the number of correct answer

N = the number of students taking test.

After collecting all the data, the writer analyzed the data. The students' individual scores from the test were computed by using the formula which was adapted from Harris (1974:79).

$$M = \frac{X}{N} \times 100$$

M = individual score

X = the number of correct answer

N = the number of item

The score of students' ability in the test were being classified to determine their level of the ability. Therefore, the classification was as follows:

**The Level of Ability**

NO.	Test Score	Level of Ability
1.	80-100	Excellent
2.	60-79	Good
3.	50-59	Average
4.	0-49	Poor

Adapted from Harris (1974)

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By using the formula from Heaton (1971), the result was found that 7 items were rejected because the difficulty level was below 0.30 and above 0.70. Those items were number 1, 2, 18, 21, and 24 which were above 0.70, while 2 items under 0.30 were numbers 33 and 35. Those items were improved.

After revising items on the instruments, the writer continued her activity by giving a test to the students. It was done in order to know the students' ability in identifying



English morphemes. The following table was the result of the sixth semester students' ability in identifying English morphemes:

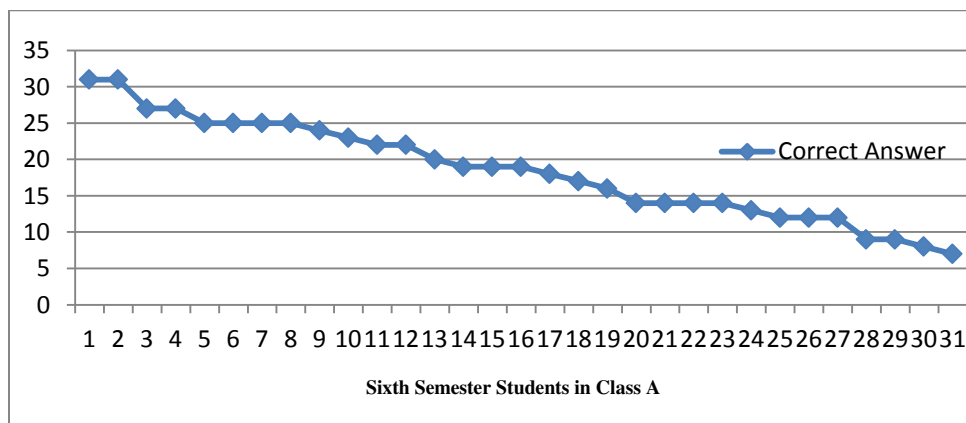
**The Level of Students' Ability**

Test Score	Level of Ability	F	Percentage
80-100	Excellent	0	0%
60-79	Good	8	25.8%
50-59	Average	5	16.12%
0-49	Poor	18	58.06%

Based on the information above, it was found that the student's average score was 46.20. Furthermore, there was no student who could achieve excellent level. It also supported by data that there were 8 students or 25.8 who could achieve good level. Then, there were 5 students or 16.12 who could achieve average level. And there were 18 students or 58.06 who were in poor level. In addition, the average of students' ability level was in poor level.

Moreover, the writer also analyzed the individual student's row scores on the test items of English morphemes. It was pictured in the following graph:

**Students' Raw Score in Answering the Test**



The graph above showed the student's correct answers which had already been ranked from the good until the poor level.

Furthermore, the writer analyzed the students' ability in identifying English morphemes in each subtopic as in the following table:

### Students' Ability in Each Subtopic of English Morphemes

Subtopics	Morphemes	Allomorphs	Derivation	Inflection
Average Score	50	52.5	36.3	55.7

The average score of the students in identifying free morpheme and bound morpheme was 50. It means that the students' ability in identifying free morpheme and bound morpheme was in **average** level. The average score of the students in identifying allomorphs was 52.5. Therefore, the students' ability in identifying allomorphs was in **average** level.

Furthermore, the average score of the students in identifying derivation was 36.3. It showed that the students' ability in identifying derivation was in **poor** level. Finally, the average score of the students in identifying inflection was 55.7. It implies that the students' ability in identifying inflection was in **average** level.

From the data above, among the four subtopics investigated, it was known that derivation was the most difficult materials for the students. Then, it was followed by morphemes, allomorphs and inflection. Although inflection was the student's highest score, it was still in **average** level.

## CONCLUSION

There were 31 students participated in this research. Out of 31 students, 8 (25.8%) students were in **good** level of ability, 5 (16.12%) students were in **average** level of ability, and the last 18 (58.06%) students were in **poor** level of ability. In addition, the average score of the students in identifying English morphemes was 46.20. It meant that the students' ability in identifying English morphemes was in a **poor** level of ability.

The average score of the students in identifying free morpheme and bound morpheme, allomorphs, derivation and inflection was 50, 52.5, 36.3, and 55.7 respectively. Derivation, with the average score of 36.3 was in a **poor** level of ability; while other subtopics morphemes, allomorphs and inflection were in **average** level of ability.

Based on the score of each subtopic, it was known that the students' ability in identifying derivation was the lowest score. This might be the analysis for derivation is more complicated and it covers a wide range of materials compared to the three other subtopics. In addition, the students' highest score was inflection. This might be inflection carries grammatical meaning (adding -ed, -es, -ing, or another irregular verb) which has already been familiar with the students.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study and the conclusion, the writer would like to propose some recommendations related to the students' ability in identifying English morphemes. The recommendations are:

- i. The students need to do more practice in order to help increase their understanding of the materials.
- ii. Further research can focus on studying each subtopic in details.
- iii. Other researchers can also focus on how to overcome the high level of difficulties of English morphology materials.

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